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## Feature

### Children *Can* Change History: American-Soviet Youth Encounters at the Artek Pioneer Camp

By Matthias Neumann

In April 2022, I had the pleasure to come to Brixton to give the first in-person talk at the SCRSS since the start of the pandemic. I spoke about my current book project, entitled *American Peace Child: Bridging the Cold War Divide in a Soviet Youth Camp*, which is under contract with University of Toronto Press. It felt odd to talk about peace and friendship at the time of Russia's war in Ukraine. But then, as a friend and colleague recently pointed out to me when I expressed those feelings, perhaps now more than ever we need history to offer moments of inspiration, alternatives, missed opportunities, and hope for the future.

My project seeks to redefine traditional understandings of peace as political, and

examines the role of children as significant historical actors during the Cold War. It reconstructs the experiences of a group of American children, the Greta Thunbergs of their day, who dared to break through the Iron Curtain to visit the international session of the famous Artek Pioneer Camp as part of exchange programmes of the National Council of American Soviet Friendship (1967–89) and the Samantha Smith Foundation (1985–91). Between 1967 and



Morning roll call ceremony, Artek Pioneer Camp international session, 1980s (SCRSS Library)

1991, these organisations enabled around 500 American children aged 12–15, from diverse socio-economic, political, and ethnic backgrounds, to visit Artek. Such delegations brought together inner-city black youth from Chicago and New York, Hispanic and Asian Americans, Native American

children from reservations in the Midwest, kids from progressive middle-class families in Florida, and the offspring of Republican military families based in Alaska.



US Artek Delegation 1986, wearing 'Peace and Friendship' T-shirts, with their Soviet peers (Private collection of Philippe Gagnon. Not to be reproduced without permission)

Over the last five years I have gathered archival evidence from Russia, Ukraine, and the United States, and interviewed more than fifty American and Soviet Artek child campers, delegation leaders and camp employees. These fascinating conversations also led to the discovery of many valuable personal documents, including letters, logbooks and diaries. One of the latter, real gold dust for a historian of the history of childhood, is the diary of Valerie Ekberg. On August 15, 1979, Valerie, a 15-year-old girl from Anchorage, Alaska, woke up to pouring rain in the dormitory she shared with a group of Soviet pioneers at the children's camp on Crimea's Black Sea coast. She was a member of that year's American delegation at the annual international session. The weather was fitting for her sombre mood – it was departure day. Reflecting on a day full of tears, Valerie wrote in her Artek diary: "I truly feel that if every person in the world went to a camp just like Artek sometime in their life there wouldn't be any more wars and there would be peace, solidarity, and friendship worldwide. I love Artek and all the friends I made there, and it hurts so bad to have to leave." Her final diary entry, a powerful document recording her mental journey in the extraordinary world of Artek, highlighted that she had fully embraced the camp's

leitmotiv of 'Peace and Friendship'. For the girl from Alaska, for whom the Soviet Union had never been geographically as far away as for her American peers, it was like a real bridge had been built across the Bering Straits.

Artek officially opened its doors in June 1925. Foreign children arrived soon thereafter, but it took until 1956, and Khrushchev's drive to relaunch the socialist project, for Artek to be converted into a real 'international' summer camp. This expansion allowed it to welcome more foreign children, whose visits were organised in a more structured and professional way. By the mid-1980s, the annual camp population had grown to over 28,000, with the international sessions hosting up to 5,000 children drawn from the fifteen Soviet republics and over sixty countries from across the world each summer. The first American delegation attended the international session in 1967.



Valerie Ekberg from Alaska. US Artek Delegation 1979 (Private collection of Valerie Ekberg-Brown. Not to be reproduced without permission)

Underpinning the initiative from the Soviet side was a belief that children could be moulded into international peace activists and hence into powerful propaganda weapons. Indeed, the notion of children demanding peace became a key trope of Soviet discourse in the USSR's struggle for moral superiority, aimed at both a domestic and a global audience. In their pursuit of peace, the American organisers supported this initiative, believing that the programmes would foster understanding and cooperation amongst a younger generation across the East–West divide. By the early 1970s peace politics had become an important international theme. In this context, Artek's international sessions became an intriguing aspect of the interplay between Soviet cultural diplomacy and the growth of citizen diplomacy, characterised by grassroots responses of American citizens to the arms race and the fear of nuclear war.

Welcoming foreign children, the camp operated as an exemplary Socialist space intended to display the Soviet system. In the process, it became a primary battleground in which the Soviet Union sought to project its image of the idealised Soviet child. Through a structured regime of mental and physical activities, alongside interactions with young Soviet pioneers, children were supposed to undergo a transformation into peace activists sympathetic to the Soviet world view. However, the international session was also a microcosm of a world in the throes of globalisation, decolonisation, and international political and cultural fragmentation: a world in which the North–South conflict became more pronounced in global politics. The special nature of this session meant that Soviet and foreign visitors alike could perceive it both as detached from the Soviet world, and part of it.

In the camp, children were exposed to the Cold War's multiple and entangled fault lines: the Arab–Israeli conflict, upheavals in Latin America, and Africa's national liberation struggles. In this environment, Soviet internationalism and state-sponsored public diplomacy collided with American citizen diplomacy and the inherent curiosity of children from across the globe. Far from

always providing a carefully controlled political space, Artek enabled American and Soviet children to discover, learn and question, and this process often led to unintended consequences.



Cover of a Soviet pamphlet about Artek published by Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, Moscow, 1975 (SCRSS Library)

One strand of my book will explore Artek as a political space, analysing the camp's success in establishing a controlled environment where American children became peace ambassadors through embracing the camp's 'Peace and Friendship' agenda. As well as analysing the ways the children were confronted with Soviet views on Western imperialism, racism and gender relations, my study will explore gaps between political intention and everyday lived realities. Crucially, the camp constituted a social space of complex and contingent human encounters. I will examine the impact of formal and informal personal exchanges, demonstrating how mutual perceptions of East and West, and deeply entrenched stereotypes and representations of the 'self' and 'other', were both formed and challenged.

A second key strand is to locate these encounters and their representations within the upsurge of citizen diplomacy in the late Cold War: a time of dramatic expansion in cultural and educational exchange programmes, tourism, sporting interactions and letter-writing. I analyse how children self-reported and disseminated their experiences upon their return, and how they spoke and wrote about their evolving concepts of the Cold War, and of each other. To track their experience back in their home communities, reportage in local and regional US media is of particular importance. Community and locality became crucial factors in the ways these encounters were reported, depoliticising the rapid growth of reciprocal transnational encounters and gradually challenging any demonisation of the 'other'. Representations (and misrepresentations) of the children's visits in national and local media, evolved from the late 1960s to the collapse of the Soviet Union, demonstrating how Artek's transnational encounters fed into a wider growth in unofficial popular diplomacy. This process played a crucial, though poorly understood, role in shifting American public discourse. As it softened attitudes towards 'Enemy No.1', it created a political space for Ronald Reagan's and Mikhail Gorbachev's active rapprochement, enabling them to rebuff challenges from Cold War hawks.

Overall, these children exchange programmes, which championed transnational cooperation, provide new evidence on the importance of citizen diplomacy in bringing the Cold War to an end. I treat children not as mere 'vessels' for disseminating US propaganda, or for imbibing its Soviet counterpart, but as effective historical agents. Children *can* change history.

A longer version of my talk, with some preliminary research findings, was published in an article entitled "'Peace and Friendship': Overcoming the Cold War in the Artek Pioneer Camp' in the latest issue of *Diplomatic History* (Volume 46, Issue 3, June 2022). Everyone interested in finding out more can have free access to the full article via my university's repository at

<https://research-portal.uea.ac.uk/en/publications/peace-and-friendship-overcoming-the-cold-war-in-the-artek-pioneer>.

*Matthias Neumann is Professor of Modern History at the University of East Anglia, in Norwich, UK. He has published widely on the history of childhood and youth in revolutionary Russia, including a monograph on 'The Communist Youth League and the Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1917–1932' (London, UK, 2011). His current research examines exchange programmes that enabled American children to visit the Soviet Union and the role of children in citizen diplomacy during the Cold War. The manuscript entitled 'American Peace Child: Bridging the Cold War Divide in a Soviet Youth Camp' is under contract with University of Toronto Press.*

## SCRSS News

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*Latest news by Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary, SCRSS*

### Library

The regular Tuesday openings at the centre are attracting increasing numbers of library volunteers. This means some areas can look a little chaotic (!), but – as can be seen in the Education and History collections in the basement – sorting, classifying and cataloguing is nearing completion. Ultimately, all the collections and other assets will appear on our new Soutron web-based catalogue. You can explore the material already entered (primarily Art, Education, History, and Theatre) via the SCRSS website. And if you happen to spot any errors, please let us know. While the focus remains on the collections in the basement, work continues in the Art Room on the first floor. On the top floor volunteers are beginning the mammoth task of sorting through the thousands of pamphlets in our collection in the Reference Room, as well as working through our extensive Russian language learning collection.

## Books for Sale

Having decided several years ago to make almost all the SCRSS Library 'reference only' (except Literature and Quick Loan), the sorting process includes the removal of duplicates that were retained when the collections were largely available for loan. We hope members will find something of interest – from literature to the Second World War and from ballet to space exploration, there are bargains to be had! Most books are in Russian, but there is plenty of English-language material too. The first-Saturday-of-the-month openings, from 11.00 to 16.00, are an ideal time to come and look around the centre and peruse the de-acquired books. We suggest a minimum 50 pence donation per book. In addition, there are a number of short runs of various periodicals from the Soviet era that are also available for members to acquire.

## Volunteering

As mentioned above, our enthusiastic team of library volunteers continues to make progress in sorting the library ahead of the Society's centenary in 2024. Please note that there are various library-related tasks that do not require Russian-language skills (such as classmark and shelf labelling). We also need more 'Guardians' willing to help with welcoming visitors, dealing with book loans and guiding researchers. The aim is to increase access to the building by opening on additional days each month, especially in 2024. If you are at all interested, please get in touch with the Honorary Secretary.

## Membership

Your support as a member is vital to the future of the Society. As an educational charity, the Society will continue to fulfil its charitable object, namely "the advancement of education, learning and knowledge of, and to promote studies in the languages, culture, history and life of Russia and the other countries and nationalities formerly constituting the Union of Soviet Socialist

Republics". A membership renewal reminder should be enclosed if your membership has expired or will do so by the end of December – this is to save the Society on postage. Please help our administration by responding as soon as possible. If you wish to set up an annual standing order to avoid such reminders, or to pay by bank transfer, simply request the SCRSS bank details.

## Keeping in Touch

There are a number of ways to keep up to date with events, library openings, etc – via email (please make sure that we have your current email address); the website ([www.scrss.org.uk](http://www.scrss.org.uk)); Facebook and Twitter (search 'SCRSS' or 'SCRSS Library'). You can help the Society's publicity by forwarding information about our events to friends and colleagues, as appropriate.

## Next Events

**Thursday 13 October 2022, 19.00**

**Lecture: Dr David Lane on *100 Years Since the Founding of the USSR***

Annual joint SCRSS and Marx Memorial Library (MML) event. Hybrid event – either attend in person at the MML premises, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1R 0DU, or online. Book via Eventbrite. Tickets £5.00 waged, £3.00 unwaged.

**Tuesday 25 October 2022, 19.00**

**Lecture: Dr Tara Wilson on *Shostakovich and Armenia***

Joint SCRSS and DSCH Journal event. In-person event held at the SCRSS premises. Book in advance via Eventbrite or tickets available on the door.

**From Thursday 27 October 2022 for 10 weeks, 18.00 - 20.00**

**Zoom Online Evening Class: Russian Language for Good Intermediate Level**

Rolling 10-week Zoom evening class, Fee for 10 weeks: £40.00 (SCRSS members only). For enquiries, email Christine Barnard direct on [rtstrans1@gmail.com](mailto:rtstrans1@gmail.com).

**Tuesday 15 November 2022, 19.00**

**Lecture: Professor Geoffrey Roberts on  
*Stalin's Library***

In-person event held at the SCRSS premises. Book in advance via Eventbrite or tickets available on the door.

*Please note that our library openings every Tuesday and on the first Saturday of the month are not listed above. For full and up-to-date details of all events, visit the SCRSS website at [www.scrss.org.uk](http://www.scrss.org.uk). Normal ticket prices apply (£3.00 SCRSS members, £5.00 non-members) for both online and in-person events, unless otherwise indicated.*

## **Soviet War Memorial Trust News**

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*Latest news by Ralph Gibson, Honorary Secretary, SWMT*

### **Remembrance Sunday 2022**

Due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, the Trustees of the SWMT will be meeting in September 2022 to discuss the annual Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Soviet War Memorial. If an Act of Remembrance takes place on 13 November 2022, details will be posted on the SCRSS and SWMT websites nearer the date. If you wish to be placed on the SWMT email list to receive updated information on its events in the future, please email the Honorary Secretary at [sovietwarmemorialtrust@gmail.com](mailto:sovietwarmemorialtrust@gmail.com).

*The Soviet War Memorial, dedicated to the 27 million Soviet men and women who lost their lives during the fight against Fascism in 1941–45, is located in the Geraldine Mary Harmsworth Park, Lambeth Road, Southwark, London SE1 (adjacent to the Imperial War Museum). The Memorial was unveiled in 1999 on the initiative of the SCRSS and the Society has been supporting the work of the SWMT since its foundation. See [www.sovietwarmemorialtrust.com](http://www.sovietwarmemorialtrust.com) for more information.*

## **Feature**

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### **After Russia's Thirty Years of Transformation, What Comes Next?**

By David Lane

War in Europe was far from the mind of Mikhail Gorbachev when, in 1986, he embarked on the policy of *perestroika*. The expectation in the West and in the communist countries was that *perestroika* would bring in a new era of peace, stability and prosperity. As transformation progressed, however, the ideals and aspirations of the reformers became part of history. In 1992 the Soviet Union disintegrated into fifteen independent states. The Soviet Union had defined people's identity, there was a sudden loss of a way of life, of any common feeling for a shared future. However, the popular anticipated transition to Western lifestyles did not happen for everyone. Instead, the population experienced structural unemployment, the destruction of the welfare state and a significant deterioration in living conditions. Russia was not accepted as an equal by the Western international political elites. Consequently, in international affairs, Russia was confronted by a stronger enlarged economic bloc in the European Union and the advance of NATO, stretching from the borders of Kaliningrad to Turkey. The USSR had not only lost the Cold War, the USA had won the following peace.

### **The Rise of Vladimir Putin**

When Vladimir Putin was elected as Acting President in 1999, the economic, political, international and moral standing of the Russian Federation could not have been lower. Russia had neither the economic capacity, political will, military resources nor the confidence and political leadership to exert any significant influence in international affairs. But, on taking power, Putin declared that "Russia was and will

remain a great power, preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence". He inherited challenges on all sides: the expansion of NATO into Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic; NATO strikes against Serbia; internally, a growing Islamist secessionist movement in Chechnya and Dagestan; and, perhaps the most important threat of all, the withholding of taxes by major companies and regional governments.

Unanticipated by the capitalist oligarchs who had supported his nomination, it became apparent that President Putin was developing a set of policies and forms of state enforcement quite different from those of his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin.<sup>1</sup> He sought to:

- establish the authority of the federal government in Russia over the regions and over the dominant political and economic classes;
- create a new moral ethos and political ideology that would legitimate a politically-led economy;
- rebuild the economy through the transfer of energy wealth to strategic industries, science and research;
- establish Russia as the bearer of a civilisation worthy of respect.

Consequently, Putin adopted a more confrontational policy against the oligarchs. He sent a strong message when Mikhail Khodorkovsky, one of his most powerful political critics, was displayed on Russian TV in handcuffs, and was later brought to trial on charges of tax evasion. Putin's statist policies had implications for foreign investment in the energy industry and he sought to change the terms of investment from which many foreign investors had benefited disproportionately under the Yeltsin regime. He wanted to create a positive image of the Russian state in terms of its history, culture, and political values. This has involved a realignment of Russia away from the USA and the European Union towards the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India,

China and South Africa). However, he had no intention of breaking up the privatised market economy. When interviewed in 2000, he stated that he was opposed to nationalisation and "the confiscation of property".<sup>2</sup>

To achieve his political objectives, Russia's policies have led to: state influence over leading Russian companies and their oligarchic owners; the renationalisation of some strategic energy companies; and a renegotiation of energy contracts with foreign corporations. Geopolitically, Putin has opposed the expansion of NATO and, with China, has challenged the hegemony of the USA in defining the conditions of international trade. Putin has made an impact. He has explicitly rejected the Western political paradigm and has instituted a form of electoral collectivist national authoritarianism. These political and economic positions are not acceptable to current Western leaders and have led to confrontation and the political polarisation of East-West relations, culminating in the war between Russia and Ukraine in 2022.

What then of the future? Will Vladimir Putin continue in power and what will be the position of Russia in its relationship to the West? There are three possible scenarios, and one likely outcome.

## **Rejoin the Western World System**

Firstly, to revert to Gorbachev's vision of a reconstituted form of social democracy acceptable to the dominant Western powers. The objective would be recognition of Russia as a respected member of the Western world political order. This would mean making a compromise with the present dominant powers, the adoption of a less confrontational policy in foreign affairs and acknowledgment of the hegemony of the USA.

Such a move would be highly dependent on, if not driven by, Western moral, economic and political backing. 'System change' is undoubtedly the preferable

policy of many Western interests. The malicious economic and personal sanctions currently imposed by the West are oriented towards weakening Russia as an economic and political power. Putin is demonised. As Joe Biden put it in Poland on 26 March 2022: "For God's sake, this man can't remain in power."

In reality, however, a movement to 'rejoin' the hegemonic Western powers on their terms is unlikely to happen for two major reasons. First, too many people have suffered as a consequence of the initial transition period. Neo-liberal policies linking Russia to the global market have led to de-industrialisation and austerity politics, and to significant moral decay and international contempt. Some who favour such a policy form the 'democratic opposition' currently loosely clustered around Alexei Navalny. Ironically, perhaps, Western policies have alienated many critics of the Putin regime, who favoured and might have benefited from rejoining the Western hegemonic bloc. The rule of law has not prevented Western governments from freezing (and sometimes disposing of) Russian assets held abroad and often unjustly penalising Russian citizens. The major political elites – big business, the 'power' agencies (police, armed forces) and the mass media – support, or acquiesce to, the Putin leadership. Second, Western political elites are unlikely to revise their negative presuppositions to accept Russia as a player able to abide by the set rules of the game. This would entail a major policy change over NATO and recognition of Russia's geopolitical interests.

The rising power of China might shift the balance of forces. Western policy could focus on dividing the growing economic and political alliance between Russia and China. Currently, in the Western foreign affairs political complex, there are influential groups in the USA advocating that Western policy should prioritise splitting Russia away from any alliance with China. In this scenario, the West should compromise with Russia. The US National Defence Authorization Act (2021), for example, envisaged further military threats to

originate from China, not Russia. A consequence of the war in Ukraine might result in (as intended by the Western powers) a considerably weaker and more compliant Russia. This is again supposition: Russia may well emerge from the conflict with Ukraine / NATO with renewed strength and a stronger pact with China.

## **State-Led Market Socialism**

A second possibility is the installation of state-led market socialism. The aim would be the revival of socialism as a civilisation, to revive Soviet ideals and to realise some of the objectives of the October Revolution. The economic base would be state-owned industries responsive to state planning. The drivers would be the Communist Party of the Russian Federation. Supports would come from the older rather than younger generation, from state employees, military personnel, lower social classes and the socialist intelligentsia. Nostalgia for the Soviet Union is strong: according to the Levada Center (an independent Russian public opinion research organisation), in 2021 some 63 per cent of the Russian population regretted the fall of the USSR, though support is clustered among the older population.<sup>3</sup> An objective would be economic development based on the use of profits for public, rather than private interest. It would prioritise social equality, full employment and social security of citizens. Planning would take over many of the functions presently performed (or not performed) by the market.

A move in this direction would involve the restoration of a state monopoly over utilities, and the renationalisation or mutualisation of financial institutions. The goal would be to make planning the principal form, and the market a secondary mechanism, of economic coordination. Some areas of private enterprise (particularly in the retail and services sector) would remain and the market mechanism would prevail in the retail sector as a distributive mechanism. One might expect that socialistic elements

could be grafted onto the hybrid economy to move to a form of market socialism. Tensions with, and opposition from, the West, even in the absence of Putin, would continue.

Under present conditions, a turn towards such a form of state-led market socialism, is unlikely. Russia lacks a socialist faction in the ruling elite or an opposition with any likelihood of replacing it. However, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation is the second largest Party and, under conditions of domestic or geopolitical crisis, it could regain control.

### **Nationally Organised Russian Capitalism**

The most likely development is the third scenario: a move towards a nationally organised form of capitalism. It would strengthen the role of the state. Under national capitalism, the private sector is supported by state institutions and banks; the government provides the long-term finance required to develop privately owned corporations. Such a policy requires a greater coordinating role for the state, similar to that in contemporary China. But Russia, under this system, would have no socialist objectives and policies would follow a liberal approach. If present trends continue, it would have a religious civilisational basis rather than a secular one. The key objectives of such a state-led system would be to reestablish Russia not only as a major international economy, but also as a civilisation. Its driving forces would be the federal state, led by the presidential apparatus. The stakeholders would be leading executives (in state-owned, as well as state-sponsored, companies in the private sector), government-friendly mass media, higher state officials, a 'loyal' nationalist intelligentsia and leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The ideological shell differs from neo-liberal capitalism. It has a form of national government that seeks to legitimate a state-led economic order: state-led markets, rather than market-led states. It challenges the American model of liberal values and

political pluralism. A move to such a form of national state-controlled capitalism is a continuation of the existing system: Putinism without President Putin. Private ownership of corporations in a market economy would continue but with greater state control and direction linked to national political and economic objectives. This is not state capitalism, but state-controlled capitalism. Such a scenario would involve the development of the current national capitalist regime.

As to the international order and the issues of war and peace: if you are a pessimist, confrontational policies will persist, probably with the emergence of a Sino-Russian led political bloc; regional competing economies will grow and severely weaken the current forms of globalisation. If you are an optimist, the West would come to accept Russia and China as world powers with their own non-Western values, and political and economic structures. World politics would experience a reversion to a stable (or at least a less unstable) system of peaceful competitive interdependence.

*David Lane is a Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and currently Emeritus Fellow of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University; he was previously Professor of Sociology at the University of Birmingham. He has written extensively on the USSR and state socialism, Marxism and socialism. Recent publications include: 'Changing Regional Alliances for China and the West' (with G Zhu, 2018); 'Elites and Identity in the Transformation of State Socialism' (2014); 'The Capitalist Transformation of State Socialism' (2014). His next book, 'Global Capitalism and its Rivals', will be published in 2023.*

### **Footnotes**

1 Goldman MI, 'Putin and the Oligarchs', *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 5, November / December 2004

2 Putin VV, *First Person*, London, Hutchinson, 2000, p.181

3 'Nostalgija po SSSR', Levada-Tsentr website, 24.12.2021, URL: <https://www.levada.ru/2021/12/24/nostalgija-po-sssr-3/>

# Feature

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## Troubles with Titles in Translation

By Andrew Jameson

Publishers think a lot about titles. A title can damn or 'make' a book. Translators have a double problem. How important is it that the original language title be recognisable in the translation? If I give it a new title that might enhance sales, or 'explain' the book's theme to the buyer, what are the ethics of that? Shall I translate the title 'as is', leaving the original author to take the blame? And what should I do if the original title is ironic or jokey or refers to knowledge that the target audience does not have? However, time shows us that translations of well-known classic and modern works do tend to 'bed down' into acceptable and recognisable versions over the years.

When the first translations from Russian nineteenth-century literature began to appear, translators were feeling their way around the bugbears of transliteration, treatment of Russian names and how to explain Russian culture. They were also using noticeably freer 'explanatory' titles.

Turgenev was a popular choice for translation in this early period, and his *Sportsman's Sketches* (*Записки охотника*) first saw the light of day as *Russian Life in the Interior or the Experiences of a Sportsman*, Edinburgh. 1855. In 1869 Ward Lock published a Turgenev double volume containing *Дворянское гнездо*, translated by William Ralston of the British Museum as *Liza or a Noble Nest*, and *Отцы и дети*, translated by Eugene Schuyler as *Fathers and Sons*. Why did Schuyler change *Children* to *Sons*? My guess is that this was for aesthetic reasons: *Fathers and Children* is an ungainly phrase in English and Schuyler considered that the text allowed him to change the title to *Sons*, and this is now the accepted version. Another example for *Дворянское гнездо*, which I cannot bear to omit, is *A Nest of Hereditary Legislators*,

translated by Francis Myddelton Davis, who also used a transliteration never seen before or since (for example, Ivan Sergaievitch Turguenieff). The usual translation today of *Дворянское гнездо* is *Home of the Gentry* (or sometimes *A House of Gentlefolk*).

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the translator's ingenuity was Griboedov's play *Горе от ума*. Two translations of this title exemplify different approaches: *Wit Works Woe* and *The Misfortune of Being Clever*. This play has recently had a run on the London stage under the title *Woe from Wit*.

The development of translation as both a science and a skill has been the academic success story of the late twentieth century. Some training might have avoided Constance Garnett's inconsistencies. Her very first translation, of Goncharov's *Обыкновенная история*, has an ambiguity in the title: *A Common Story* (*An Ordinary Story* would have been better). With Tolstoy, Garnett insists on the form *Anna Karenin* and justifies it in a Translator's Note. This domestication is in contrast to her foreignisation of *The Brothers Karamazov*, using the Russian word order. It would also be interesting to know why Garnett translated the title *Бесы* (literally 'The Devils') as *The Possessed*, which introduces an ambiguity to something that was clear enough before. Despite the freedom expressed in that instance, Garnett uses the literal *Children* instead of *Sons* in her translation of the Turgenev novel. These minor comments, of course, are not intended to diminish Garnett's status as the most important translator of the period.

After October 1917, Russia began again from zero. It took a while for long-form literature to reappear and for it to be translated. Many book titles from the early period were simply descriptive, until Ilf and Petrov appeared on the scene with two humorous classics *Двенадцать стульев* (1928) and *Золотой телёнок* (1931). The first, translated as *The Twelve Chairs*, was enigmatic enough, but then Elizabeth Hill and Doris Mudie topped it with a translation called *Diamonds to Sit On*, thereby creating

a spoiler that gave away half the plot. The second bore a title with a little linguistic joke in Russian, which many English speakers miss. In Russian, one would be expecting *телец* (in Old Church Slavonic) rather than *телёнок* – from the biblical story of the Golden Calf, set up and worshipped by the Israelites. *Золотой телёнок* is an unholy clash of styles. And how much explanation can you put into such a short title? The most that translators have been able to do with this is to add one extra adjective: *The Little Golden Calf*. Further suggestions are invited!

The third major work by Ilf and Petrov is little known, and it was an unusual venture: in ten weeks they drove across the USA and back, observing, interviewing, photographing. Their title for this humorous travelogue was *Одноэтажная Америка* (*One-Storeyed America*), because they concluded that almost all Americans lived in one- or two-storied small towns. The work has been described as fair, wide-reaching, revealing and a credit to international relations. It was the American publisher who asked for a different title to the translation: *Little Golden America*. Apparently, he wished to follow up on the success of their second book.

At the same time there was considerable interest in the West in life in the new socialist state. When a book entitled *Республика ШКИД* \* appeared in Russia in 1927, it was translated by Alexander Werth under the title *Diary of a Communist Schoolboy* in 1928. This strange book was written by L. Panteleev and Grigori Belykh, and was a partly autobiographical account of life at a boarding school set up to reform homeless children who had run wild and needed to be re-socialised. The English title of the translation was very misleading and was probably designed to increase sales rather than inform about the content.

Evgenia Ginzburg's memoir *Крымский маршрут* (literally 'Tough (or Steep) Journey') deals with the purges in the thirties and was published in Russian in 1967. One of the translation problems mentioned at the beginning of this article

arose: how do readers know enough to choose to buy it? Publicity was needed, and an arresting title. Collins chose *Into the Whirlwind*. When Harcourt brought out an improved translation, they could not repeat this, so they added to it: *Journey into the Whirlwind*. And when Book Two of the memoir appeared years later, the translation was entitled *Within the Whirlwind*. I wonder if they could have done better?

I'd like to end this article with something that is a special case in Russian literature. This is the title of Mayakovsky's narrative poem *Про эмо*. In most translations of Mayakovsky this is just translated as *About This*. I think that translators could have tried harder to understand what they have here. Bengt Jangfeldt, in his definitive biography of Mayakovsky, notes that Mayakovsky's favourite author was Dostoevsky. In his novel *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov uses the idiom (*ём*) *эмо* consistently to avoid referring directly to his crimes. Jangfeldt also suggests that Mayakovsky identified with Raskolnikov's narcissism and his obsessions (but not, of course, with crime). What does linguistics have to say about this particular language usage? In Russian linguistics we know that *этот* (*эта, это, эти*) is one of the most frequent 'filler' words used in speech. It is used as a substitute while searching for the right word, or to avoid a sensitive usage. This gives us a basis for an appropriate translation of this unusual poem title. Answers, in an email please, to [a.jameson2@outlook.com](mailto:a.jameson2@outlook.com). There will be a small prize.

*After studying Russian and radio technology at the Joint Service Language School, Andrew Jameson first worked in signals intelligence in Berlin. After Oxford, he taught Russian at Essex University, while also working as a sound recordist in Russia for the Nuffield-funded Russian Language Project. He later taught Russian at Portsmouth Polytechnic and Lancaster University. Now retired, he works as a professional translator.*

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# Feature

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## Stanislavsky's System in the Cinema

By Vsevolod Pudovkin

*Vsevolod Pudovkin (1893–1953) was a Soviet film director, screenwriter and actor. As a film director, he is particularly well known for his 1920s 'revolutionary' trilogy of silent films – 'Mother' (1926), 'The End of St Petersburg' (1927) and 'Storm Over Asia' (1928). This is an abridged reprint from the 'Anglo-Soviet Journal' (ASJ), Vol. XIII, No. 3, 1952, pages 34–44. The ASJ was published by the Society between 1940–92.*

Throughout the history of its development our cinematic art has always been closely linked with the great traditions of progressive Russian art to which the interests of the people were the breath of life.

Foremost in the ranks of those who continued and developed these traditions was KS Stanislavsky (...) Stanislavsky's aim was to create a realistic theatre. All his artistic conceptions, the whole of his intuition, were applied to breaking away from the hackneyed theatrical technique and to finding such lines for the actor's work as would always make the theatre a vivid reflection of real life (...) The cinema, which is closely linked both with theatrical art and with literature and the graphic arts, has naturally adopted the basic principles of Stanislavsky's school and continues to develop them successfully.

Although Stanislavsky did not directly concern himself with cinema, in his theatrical work he had to face a number of problems to which the art of cinema alone could offer a complete solution. In his book *My Artistic Life*, Stanislavsky gives the story of the première of the play *The Loss of 'Hope'* in Studio I of the Arts Theatre. The play was staged and acted in a hall so small that the audience was close up to the actors. Owing to the closeness of the public

and cast, all exaggeration of gesture and intonation had to go and every half-tone and subtle nuance acquired extreme importance (...) He wanted to carry this Studio I experience on to the big stage of the Arts Theatre, but this proved unexpectedly impossible, for the studio performance, created in a small hall, literally could be neither seen or heard in one built to hold hundreds of spectators (...) He did not know, of course, that everything that had been discovered during the intimate performance at Studio I (...) was perfectly possible to the new cinematic art, which brings the actor close to the spectator and yet broadens out the hall to the ends of the earth.

Stanislavsky's endeavour to bring the actor's art as close as possible to a truthful and delicate rendering of human experience was more than once brought up short by the limitations of the stage (...) [His] attempts to create scenery and surroundings as close as possible to reality were often criticised as an unnecessary introduction of superfluous realism on to the stage (...) It should be noted that the cinema, directly derived from dramatic art, in its development departs from the drama and comes closer in essence to the novel. The theatre too had tried to divorce itself from the literary dramatic form composed mainly of dialogue, but the efforts to introduce into the stage performance a broad picture of real life, as drawn in the novel, produced purely formalistic results. A rapid sequence of short descriptive scenes, a piling up of complicated sets (...) and other conventional symbols and signs which the producers tried to substitute for the realistic simplicity of painted scenery, could not ultimately exist side by side with the realistic acting of the artist.

Things were quite different in the cinema. There the novel-like performance, impracticable on the stage, proved quite possible. The cinema provided the realistic actor with many new opportunities of giving a direct reflection of life, and it became the highway to the development of his art (...) But the application in cinematography of Stanislavsky's methods must not consist in

a mere direct borrowing of results achieved in the theatre. It must lead to their further development in new technical conditions (...)

On starting independent work (...) Stanislavsky's system became my school, and my first experiments in cinematography aimed at shaking off every convention of stage technique unnecessary to the screen-actor. From the first I took a dislike to artificial scenery, realising all the cinema's capacity to absorb creatively the natural surroundings in which living people – the actors – can move.

Having acquainted myself with Stanislavsky's method of training actors, I realised that while the essence of this realist method was indispensable to cinematic art, much of its technique (...) was foreign to the very nature of the cinema (...) When I first met Stanislavsky's pupils and followers, during the production of the film *Mother*, we found it hard going (...) As a producer I found much of their technique unacceptable. Not that their acting had anything artificial about it (...), but there were external peculiarities of acting unwanted on the screen, a theatrical emphasis of speech and gesture needed on the stage in order to be visible and audible to an audience separated from the actors by considerable distances. Feeling as I did that the screen demanded from acting the nearest possible approach to human behaviour in ordinary life, the first task I set myself and the artist was the search for the greatest possible spontaneity and simplicity. I knew, of course (...) that the screen needed a somewhat heightened expressiveness, but even then I realised the special capacities that distinguished the cinema from the theatre. Clearly, with an actor taken in close-up, what was needed first and foremost was complete truthfulness of acting (...)

In my search for means of bringing real life on to the screen I tried to [film] people who were not professional actors (...) Curiously enough, as soon as I began to work with non-actors I immediately discovered that they are faced with a number of difficulties which threaten to destroy the precious truth of their behaviour. The unusual

surroundings, the conventional demands made by the producer, the presence of the camera – all this puts them off and creates a stiffness which they have to be helped to overcome. Here I discovered the decisive importance in getting a man to behave unselfconsciously, of a simple physical task which completely absorbs their attention and thus frees him from stiffness (...)

Temporarily and conventionally I shall separate two fields of work on creative imagination (...): the one connected with the external expression of the actor's thoughts and feelings, his behaviour, and the other connected with his emotional state (...) The solving of the physical problem, as Stanislavsky rightly understands it, is as it were the culmination of the inner process (...) The art of the actor in silent films developed first of all in the field of physical action, where both he and the producer had to seek the greatest possible truthfulness of expression. Here Stanislavsky's ideas proved exceptionally fruitful, while the practical experience of the silent cinema was in its turn useful and important for experimental work on a scale impossible for the theatre. The sub-titles were a sort of summing-up of the deep and subtle unspoken acting which gave full expression to the actor's emotional state (...) [The] entire period of the silent film was in essence a development and elaboration of [Stanislavsky's] school of acting, linked with the search for the truth of physical action. In this sense the period of the silent film provided all that was necessary for the later stages, when sound and speech came in (...) The screen offers the actor a special opportunity for reducing gesture to the minimum, which in itself makes it all the more expressive. The screen actor has the advantage over the stage actor that he can behave towards the spectator just as he would towards someone standing at his side (...)

Work on a stage or a screenplay may present two possibilities: either the producer and the actor discover the truth of life hidden but actually existing in the scene, or else they introduce a necessary correction suggested by their perception of truth trained by practical realist experience. In

both cases, a clear and definite method of work is imperative. This is the method Stanislavsky discovered for theatrical art, which has found tremendous new possibilities of fruitful development in cinematic art.

## Book Reviews

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### **The Blockade Swallow**

**By Olga Berggolts (translated and with an introduction by Veniamin Gushchin, Ripon, Smokestack Books, 2022, ISBN: 978-1-8384653-6-0, Pbk, 108pp, £8.99, bilingual text on facing pages, acknowledgements)**

### **Tyorkin in the Other World**

**By Alexander Tvardovsky (translated and with an introduction by Patricia Wheeler, Ripon, Smokestack Books, 2021, ISBN: 978-1-8384653-5-3, Pbk, 144pp, £8.99, bilingual text on facing pages)**

I enjoy reviewing books published in my birthplace! Smokestack Books in Ripon, Yorkshire, is producing a very accessible series of modern poetry, and among them are a number of Russian poets.

I mentioned Olga Berggolts in my article 'The Great Patriotic War in Soviet Literature' in the summer 2020 issue of the *SCRSS Digest*, and now here is a timely book of her poetry. Berggolts is a shining example of the Russian spirit in adversity, and a heroine in her advocacy of lyrical poetry in an era of utilitarian values in society. Although in the insanity of the purges she had been accused of taking part in a Trotskyist conspiracy, she was exonerated. Not long after this she was working for Leningrad Radio, speaking on the air and reciting her poetry during the blockade. She is famous for supporting the morale of the population during that desperate time, for which she received the medal *For the Defence of Leningrad*. She is the author of the famous words on the monument in the Piskaryovskoe Memorial Cemetery: *Никто не забыт, ничто не забыто* (No one is

forgotten, nothing is forgotten). Her post-war poems are very frank and very personal. By the way, her name comes from her Baltic German father who was a Latvian citizen.

While Olga Berggolts strikes one as an innocent who never lost her faith in true feeling and emotion, with Tvardovsky we are immediately back in the political games played by writers and ideologues, manoeuvrings and power struggles.

Tvardovsky started life as a loyal Party member, supported collectivisation, became a war correspondent and then, almost by accident, created Vasily Tyorkin, a cheery lovable folk soldier-hero who took everything as it came and never once mentioned anything Soviet. On the basis of this huge success he became the editor of *Novy Mir* and joined the Central Committee. Without going into detail, however, Tvardovsky was critical of the clichés of Socialist Realism, and censorship. In 1954 he began writing *Tyorkin in the Other World*. This underworld is actually a parody of Stalin's Russia, with apparatchiks, regime toadies and a propaganda machine that exploits Tyorkin's naivety and builds him up as a heroic symbol of socialism. Tyorkin's message to his readers at the end is this: speak openly (echoing Khrushchev's Twentieth Party Congress speech). That this work even exists and that it circulated in official circles is astonishing. Even more so that it was read publicly at Khrushchev's dacha on the Black Sea after the Leningrad conference of COMES (Community of European Writers). Foreign writers present included Angus Wilson, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir.

In both books the translator may or may not have succeeded in aligning rhythms and rhymes as much as they would have wanted. It is worth checking both languages (if you are able) to enjoy the pithiness of Russian and to check that the emphasis intended by the Russian author is carried through into English. Perfection is difficult but I would say that the overall tone is preserved.

*Andrew Jameson*

## **Peter the Great's African: Experiments in Prose**

**By Alexander Pushkin (edited by Robert Chandler, translated by Robert Chandler, Elizabeth Chandler & Boris Dralyuk, New York Review Books, 2022, ISBN: 9781681375991, Pbk, 208pp)**

This is a curious collection of four unfinished works by Pushkin, translated by the regular team of Robert and Elizabeth Chandler, and Boris Dralyuk. Who is the intended audience? Those most interested in exploring Pushkin's minor works are surely likely to be Russianists able to read them in the original. Perhaps the publication is really an exercise in translation?

*The History of the Village of Goriukhino* is a funny account of an ancient but now impoverished village and its noble family. The narrator Ivan Belkin (the same fictional village squire from Pushkin's better-known *The Tales of Belkin*) is an enthusiastic but amateurish historian. He lurches through inconsequential trivia before the tale ends abruptly with the arrival of a new steward brought in to crack down on the Belkin family's lazy serfs.

*Dubrovsky* is a tale of revenge, romance and redemption. A trivial quarrel between two old country noblemen escalates into a faked lawsuit, dispossession and death, with the baton of vengeance passed down to the next generation. The description of the corrupt court case (based on a real judgment by a Russian court in 1832) and its violent aftermath is particularly interesting.

*The Egyptian Nights* is an odd hybrid with three prose chapters and two long passages of verse (reworked from earlier poems by Pushkin) on the conflict between poetic inspiration and the artist's prosaic need to earn a living.

The best piece in the collection is *Peter the Great's African*. The novel is based on the life of Pushkin's maternal great-grandfather Abram Petrovich Gannibal, an African enslaved as a child and later gifted to Peter the Great, who became the Tsar's favourite

and godson, was educated, rose to the rank of lieutenant-general and ennobled. Here, Abram becomes Ibrahim and the plot moves from a spell at the licentious French Court, following military service in the French army, to his return to Russia and Peter's matchmaking to find him a wife. Pushkin was fascinated by Peter the Great (see *The Bronze Horseman*, among others) and carried out archival research on him when appointed Russia's official historian laureate in 1831. In this work he explores Peter's sweeping reforms of society, in particular of the nobility, but it also raises uncomfortable issues of race and racism. In France, there is a peepshow curiosity about the educated African, and when his lover, the Countess D, becomes pregnant, the gossip is all about the baby's expected colour. In Russia, Peter's arrangements to marry Ibrahim to the daughter of an ancient boyar family are met with horror. This has interesting modern parallels – think Meghan Markle and Prince Harry. Like Ibrahim, Pushkin had insecurities about his "black blood" while also believing it was the source of his creativity.

Inevitably, there is something unsatisfactory about unfinished works. However, the stories are lifted by the elegant translations, and Robert Chandler's extensive footnotes and afterword add detailed historical and literary context, as well as offering interesting theories as to why Pushkin felt unable to finish them.

*Diana Turner*

## **Soviets in Space: The People of the USSR and the Race to the Moon**

**By Colin Turbett (Pen and Sword History, 2021, ISBN: 9781399004862, Hbk, 206pp, £25.00)**

This is the third book by Colin Turbett for Pen and Sword Books \*, all of which reflect his long-held interest in the history of the Soviet Union and its people. This latest volume, as he mentioned during his talk to the SCRSS on Cosmonautics' Day earlier this year, is not intended to be a detailed, technical one. Instead, it explores the social context in which the Soviet space

programme developed after the Second World War.

Many of the personalities will be familiar, but here we find names that are not so well known. The book is dedicated to three 'Valentinas' – Pomarova, Gagarina and Tereshkova. As far as the author is concerned, the first "should have made it into space" as one of the group of women cosmonauts recruited in the early 1960s. The second was "the main support of the first one to do so" and the third was "a textile worker who dreamed of driving trains but ended up doing what no woman had ever done".

Interspersed with chapters on the origins and development of the Soviet space programme are others reminding us that the citizens of the USSR, particularly by the 1950s and 60s, had experienced life in a very different society. Thus, there are explorations on popular films, humour and two other state-sponsored prestige projects – the Virgin Lands campaign and the building of the Baikal-Amur Mainline. "All three had economic and strategic goals, but very importantly, also represented the idealistic aspirations of the USSR, and its attempts to bring on board its people."

The extraordinary achievements in the early days of Sputniks and space dogs, leading to the epoch-defining flight of Yuri Gagarin in April 1961, are well covered. The people in the background also feature – the "Chief Designer", Sergei Korolev, and others who designed, built and launched the spacecraft that challenged global perceptions of the superiority of the USA in the Cold War. After so many space 'firsts', the failure to put a cosmonaut on the moon ahead of its rival was a huge setback. But as we see, Gagarin's flight threw down a challenge that within weeks had US President Kennedy announcing that "the Americans would be in the moon by the end of the decade".

The last chapter, 'The End of the Soviet Dream', is an interesting summary of the final years of the USSR, giving the author's perspective on those turbulent years. He discusses the economy, the shooting down

of the Korean airlines flight 007 in 1983, Chernobyl, Afghanistan and the unrest in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe. The book is well illustrated and has an excellent bibliography reflecting the range of topics covered.

\* Other books by Colin Turbett that may be of interest to members are: *Red Star at War: Victory At All Costs* (2020) and *The Anglo-Soviet Alliance: Comrades and Allies During WW2* (2021)

*Ralph Gibson*

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